

Claims:

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1. An inflatable sterile enclosure comprising a flexible membrane and at least a pair of rigid or semi-rigid panels which are arranged to pivot outwardly relative to one another on each side of the enclosure as it is inflated, wherein at least one of the panels is transparent and provides a window.

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2. An enclosure as claimed in claim 1, wherein the panels in said at least one pair of panels are hinged together.

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3. An enclosure as claimed in claim 1, wherein the panels in said at least one pair of panels are spaced apart on a flexible portion of the enclosure.

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4. An enclosure as claimed in claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein a plurality of panels are provided on each side of the enclosure.

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5. An enclosure as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said panels are arranged on the enclosure such that they can be folded to a position lying generally one above the other with the flexible membrane located therebetween.

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6. An enclosure as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the flexible membrane is in the form of a collapsible bubble.

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7. An enclosure as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the flexible membrane is transparent.

8. An enclosure as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a gas entry port through which gas or air may be passed in use to inflate the enclosure.

5 9. An enclosure as claimed in claim 8, further comprising a sterilising filter for sterilising the air or gas in use.

10 10. An enclosure as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a source of pressurised air or gas arranged in communication with the interior of the enclosure for inflating the enclosure in use.

15 11. An enclosure as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising elongate support members mounted and arranged on the flexible membrane so as to provide a supporting frame for the enclosure once it is inflated.

20 12. An enclosure as claimed in claim 11, wherein the support members are configured to be interconnectable with one another to form a support frame after inflation of the enclosure.

25 13. A collapsible, sterile enclosure comprising a flexible membrane which can be inflated to define the interior of the enclosure, there being a plurality of elongate support members secured to the membrane, said members being arranged to define a supporting frame for the enclosure when erected.

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14. A collapsible, sterile enclosure comprising a flexible membrane which can be inflated to define an interior of the enclosure, the membrane being provided with one or more inflatable support members, said
35 members being arranged to define a supporting frame for the enclosure when erected.

15. A closed, generally tubular sterile enclosure adapted to form a peripheral enclosure to a large sterile enclosure, comprising an end wall member having means for joining it to a wall of a larger enclosure,
5 wherein a surface on or adjacent to the end wall member is provided with a bactericidal substance which sterilises the join formed between the enclosures in use, the peripheral enclosure containing one or more surgical instruments.
- 10 16. A tubular sterile enclosure as claimed in claim 15, wherein the bactericidal substance is covered by a removable protective layer.
- 15 17. A tubular sterile enclosure as claimed in claim 15 or 16, wherein the joining means comprises an adhesive.
- 20 18. A tubular sterile enclosure as claimed in claim 17, wherein the adhesive is provided on the end wall member of the peripheral enclosure as an adhesive tape or layer.
- 25 19. A tubular sterile enclosure as claimed in claim 17 or 18, wherein the adhesive has a removable backing layer.
- 30 20. A tubular sterile enclosure as claimed in claim 17, 18 or 19, wherein the joining means comprises an adhesive provided on a flange portion which extends radially outward from the main body of the peripheral enclosure.
21. A tubular sterile enclosure as claimed in any of claims 15 to 20, wherein the end wall member of the peripheral enclosure within the joining means comprises a sponge material impregnated with a bactericidal

substance.

22. A tubular sterile enclosure as claimed in any of claims 15 to 21, wherein the joining means or the region within the joining means comprises a perforable membrane.

23. A tubular sterile enclosure as claimed in claim 22, wherein the joining means comprises a membrane having a cleft sealed by a weaker membrane.

24. A peripheral enclosure having a sterile interior adapted to be securable to a sterile operating enclosure and to permit communication between the enclosures without contamination, a connecting surface of the peripheral enclosure being provided with a sponge material impregnated with a bactericidal substance and arranged to sterilise inter-engaged portions of the enclosures in use.

25. An operating enclosure having a flexible membrane wall, there being a closed attachment compartment of flexible material secured to the wall, the interior of the compartment being sterile, the compartment being pleated to enable pressure to be manually applied on a reverse face of the compartment and transmitted to its front face, whereby an item can be engaged under pressure with the front face and adhered thereto, without the need to access the sterile interior to apply such pressure.

26. A surgical dock or drape having an upper surface and a lower surface, at least a portion of both the upper and lower surfaces comprising a bactericidal adhesive or adhesive tape for joining the surgical dock or drape both to a patient and to an overlying operating enclosure in use.

27. A surgical dock or drape provided with means having a bactericidal substance arranged to sterilise in use regions of an underlying patient and of an operating enclosure overlying the dock or drape.

28. A surgical dock or drape as claimed in claim 27, comprising a layer in which the central portion is a sponge impregnated with a bactericidal substance and arranged to engage both the patient and the operating enclosure in use.

29. A surgical dock or drape as claimed in claim 28, wherein an outer portion of the surgical dock or drape surrounding the sponge comprises an adhesive or bactericidal adhesive on either or both of the surfaces which contact the enclosure and patient in use.

30. A surgical dock or drape as claimed in claim 27, 28 or 29, wherein an outer portion of the surgical dock or drape comprises separate docking and patient layers for adhering to the operating enclosure and patient respectively in use.

31. A surgical dock or drape as claimed in claim 30, wherein the docking layer is rigid and the patient layer is flexible so that it can conform to the patient in use.

32. A surgical dock or drape as claimed in any of claims 27 to 31, wherein the means having a bactericidal substance is a membrane layer which seals an opening in the surgical dock or drape and wherein the membrane layer comprises a bactericidal adhesive or adhesive tape.

33. A surgical dock or drape as claimed in any of

claims 27 to 32, further comprising an inflatable portion which is arranged to surround the area of incision in a patient in use.

34. A surgical dock or drape as claimed in claim 33, wherein the inflatable portion comprises an adhesive or bactericidal adhesive.

35. A glove carrier comprising a sterile glove region enclosed by a flexible membrane, wherein the flexible membrane comprises at least one exterior thumb or finger compartment alignable in use with a thumb or finger portion of the glove enclosed within the membrane.

36. A glove carrier as claimed in claim 35, wherein the exterior of the flexible membrane is provided with joining means proximal to the fingers of the glove portion so as to enable the flexible membrane of the glove carrier to be attached to an operating enclosure in use.